# Daylily

10 little poems and how they were made.

The bright little book you are holding is a collection of 10 poems, each written in a different poetic form. An explanation of how they were made appears on the back of each poem. I got almost all the descriptions from the website of the Academy of American Poets at www.poets.org. It's an excellent resource that also provides classic examples of each form. I had fun writing these poems and I bet you would too. Try them!

Happy poeming,

Katie

## Find Your Way

With simple means
and using your own personal measurements
determine a height you cannot reach
and a width you cannot walk.
Call loudly for help if you are alone,
and keep on calling.

## *Found Poetry*

A found poem is comprised completely of outside texts. The words may be rearranged or simply taken out of context in order to give them a new depth. All that's required is the ability to see the poetry hiding in street signs, assembly instructions, math text books, owner's manuals, etc. I made this poem out of lines in the Orienteering section of the 1948 edition of The Boyscout Handbook.

## Passion

Funny
how this one word
can mean either bristling
with life, or the slow painful trudge
to death

## *Cinquain*

Traditionally, a cinquain is a poem or a stanza of a poem composed of five lines. The origin of the form dates back to medieval France. The most common cinquains in English follow a rhyme scheme of *ababb, abaab* or *abccb*. Adelaide Crapsey, an early twentieth-century poet, used a form of 22 syllables distributed among five lines in a 2, 4, 6, 8, and 2 pattern; that is the format I followed with the poem "Passion."

## Warping the Loom: A pantoum

1 Before you the threads are strung in two taut rows, ready.
2 One fluid movement will bring them together.
3 The threads, which point in opposing directions, must meet
4 at perfect right angles, making of the many, one.

2 One fluid movement will bring them together,
5 this riot of threads in blues, reds, yellows and greens,
4 at perfect right angles. Making of the many, one
6 throw rug or scarf to keep out the cold. It's a practical art.

5 This riot of threads in blues, reds, yellows and greens
7 stand at attention and wait:
6 Throw rug, or scarf to keep out the cold? It's a practical art,
8 this patience to watch and see what you'll become.

7 Stand at attention and wait
9 to see your work completed.
8 This patience to watch and see what you'll become
10 is the thing you can learn from a still-quiet loom.

9 To see your work completed
3 the threads, which point in opposing directions, must meet.
10 Is the thing you can learn from a still-quiet loom
1 before you? The threads are strung in two taut rows, ready.

## *Pantoum*

The pantoum was originally a Malaysian form used in the 15th century that became popular with French and British writers during the 19th century, including Baudelaire and Victor Hugo. Western writers have not typically used rhyme in their pantoums. The line numbers on mine, "Warping the Loom," show the pattern of repetition.

## On Art, Life, and Small Explosions

I just sat down to work on a new poem, but there's gonna be fireworks over the bay in like an hour, so fireworks have seeped into my subconscious and exploding stars are crowding out the other ideas in there. And everything I write is popping gunfire and cannon booms and the electric buzz of strangers sitting close enough to touch. And writing, I'm afraid that images of embers dying and of tiny lights going out at different points along their fall to earth are hokey, so let me just say this: I'll tap at my keyboard for an hour or so but by nine thirty I'll be out there too. I'll join the others lying back on cold humps of sand, looking up into the endless dark and waiting for the show.

# Prose Poetry

On the slippery subject of prose poems, the Academy of American Poets quotes Peter Johnson, the editor of The Prose Poem: An International Journal: "Just as black humor straddles the fine line between comedy and tragedy, so the prose poem plants one foot in prose, the other in poetry, both heels resting precariously on banana peels." Okay, but I like to think that all comedy has a note of tragedy in it, and that's what makes it funny. Maybe all good prose has poetry hiding inside it too.

Rummage sale, musty
but full of treasures: swanky
coats, rings that still shine.

*

When it rains, hush-like,
I want to be quiet too.
Hear the train clack by?

## *Haiku*

A traditional Japanese haiku is a 3-line poem with 17 syllables, written in a 5-7-5 syllable count. But I once took a poetry workshop with a teacher who said that the syllable count is not as important as everyone thinks it is. He said the best way to think of it is this: A haiku is a one-breath poem. You should be able to read it in the time it takes to take one breath. That's nice, isn't it? The other important thing is that a haiku should capture a moment, a physical description, not an emotion or mental reflection.

When it's hot my brain can hardly work
though it keeps me up all through the night
sweating, tossing, turning over thoughts that lurk

in darkness while the sun shines hard enough to perk
up others, but not me. It shines so painfully bright.
When it's hot my brain can hardly work.

I try to sigh but I can't even breathe this soppy murk.
If you think that sounds unpleasant, well, you're right.
I'm sweating, tossing, turning over thoughts that lurk,

Like, *Are my obsessions crazy, or just quirks?*
In December I can believe that things will be all right
but when it's hot my poor brain can hardly work.

Everyone I know seems like a jerk.
Every conversation is a fight.
When it's hot my brain can hardly work.
I'm sweating, tossing, turning over thoughts, and still they
lurk.

# *Villanelle*

A villanelle is 19 lines long. It uses 2 rhymes and also repeats 2 lines throughout the poem. The first 5 stanzas are triplets and the last stanza is a quatrain, which makes the rhyme scheme: aba aba aba aba aba abaa. The first and third line of the first stanza are alternately repeated throughout the poem (look at my poem and find the repetition), and the last 2 lines of the poem are lines 1 and 3, respectively. It sounds complicated but it's not hard to do if you use another villanelle as a guide. One very famous one is "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas.

## An Elegy on Oswald's

I still remember the sad, sad day
When I went walking across the way
To a place where envelopes could be got,
But found that Oswald's had closed up shop!

The store was old and weird but they had candy.
And soda, and cigarettes, and...milk! That was handy.
The shelves were actually sort of dusty and spare
But it was just around the corner, so I didn't care.

But now they're not there anymore,
The grouchy old ladies who minded the store,
The creepy pharmacist and the strange things for sale,
like dying potted plants and enormous pairs of underwear, uh—
Still, I feel sad. It's the end of an era.

## *Elegy*

Elegies are ancient. They are written about the death of a person or some other kind of loss. (I made mine humorous by writing about a not very useful store in my neighborhood.) A traditional elegy, which originated in ancient Greece, reflects the 3 stages of loss. The first stanza is a lament, the second praises the person or thing that's gone, and the third makes peace with the loss.

## Safe As Houses

Alone in my apartment, I live a rich, full life.
Though others may fill theirs with *sturm und* strife
I find that I don't mind if mine is slow.
I don't need to rush around, to come and go;
That kind of chaos cuts my concentration like a knife.

My bookcase, my desk of papers, these are rife
With possibility, and green growy things on windowsills fill the place with life.
My cat is always with me, so that's one dear friend and zero foes
In my apartment.

When I'm reading, writing, singing to myself I make a wife
Of me. And paging through the dictionary is fine for a nightlife!
(If you ask me out I'll probably say no.)
There's room enough for me to grow
In my apartment.

## *Rondeau*

Rondeaus originated in 13th-century France and were used by musicians as well as poets. The rondeau repeats the same line in a refrain after each stanza, you see—like a song! It has 15 lines divided into 3 stanzas, and the refrain is made up of the first line or the first few words of that line. A famous rondeau is John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields," which is the one I used as a guide to write "In My Apartment."

## Go Home

There once was a terrible houseguest,
who made of herself a great big pest.
This hungry, talkative ex-friend
gave new meaning to the phrase "long weekend"
and now I'm in need of some bed rest.

## *Limerick*

Everybody loves a limerick. Some famous poets who wrote in this silly form are Edward Lear, Rudyard Kipling and Robert Louis Stevenson.

Some say they'd rather find someone than be alone
I say one's own company can be fine.
Not if one is neurotic or sad, of course—
Got to stay busy and fill up the time.
Love is lovely, at first, till the fan belt pops loose
and the engine starts to whine
Even two who get together end up single
somewhere down the line.

## *Abecedarian*

The abecedarian is an ancient form, with the earliest known examples coming from religious Hebrew poetry. The word abecedarian is made of the first three letters in the alphabet, which is awesome enough in itself. Usually the first line or stanza of an abecedarian poem begins with the first letter of the alphabet and progressed from there, but sometimes the first letter of the each line in the poem spells a word, like in my poem ("single"). This kind of abecedarian is called an acrostic.

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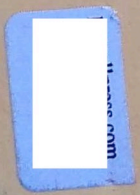
not that different from



learning to dance ...